



News for Immediate Release

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DWR Announces Report on Floods in California  
New Recommendations to Reduce Flood Damage, Preserve Agriculture  
and Restore the Environment

SACRAMENTO -- The Department of Water Resources announced that a report urging a higher level of protection from California floods was delivered to the Legislature today. Among its other recommendations, the California Floodplain Management Task Force recommended that homes and businesses be built at least one foot higher than the previously expected '100-year flood level,' and that out-of- date floodplain maps be redrawn.

"Floods are an inevitable part of California's natural setting", said Jonas Minton, Deputy DWR Director. "This report addresses important issues of public safety in the State's floodplains. It will help educate the public, and ensure that California is safer and better prepared the next time the floodwaters start rising".

The Task Force's Report notes that many Californians have a false sense of safety from floods, the result of incomplete information. Current flood threats are higher than commonly thought; the term "100-year flood", for example, is misleading. It does not denote a flood that will occur only once every 100 years, as is commonly believed. Rather, it is the flood elevation that has a one- percent chance of being equaled or exceeded each year. "Over the lifetime of a 30-year mortgage, there is a 26-percent chance of being flooded by a 100-year flood", the Task Force Report states.

Moreover, new housing and other development may be increasing flood perils and damages for millions of Californians. "As new development occurs, more hard surfaces, such as roads and roofs, accelerate and increase flood runoff, increasing the size and often the depth of the floodplain," says the report, which also notes that many floodplain maps have not been

updated for over a decade and therefore do not accurately reflect today's development.

Maps of the National Flood Insurance Program determine who must buy flood insurance and guide local government decisions on new developments.

The Floodplain Management Task Force-established last year by the Department of Water Resources as recommended in Assembly Bill 1147 (Chapter 1071, Statutes of 2000) (Honda)-was comprised of a diverse group of builders, real estate professionals, environmentalists, and State and local agency officials.

Among the panel's other recommendations are calls to:

- Inform the public of the dangers of cascading boulders and mudslides during flash floods that can devastate subdivisions built on alluvial fans at the base of foothills, particularly in Southern California.
- Use flood plains for the multiple purposes of farming, recreation, and wildlife as well as flood protection.

In 1997, floods forced 120,000 Californians to evacuate their homes, caused \$2 billion in property damage and killed nine people. Floods in 1995 killed 28 people, a 1986 flood killed 13 people, and a 1955 flood killed 74 people. Since 1950, all 58 California counties have been declared flood disaster areas no fewer than three times.

A copy of the report can be found at <http://fpmtaskforce.water.ca.gov/>.

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The Department of Water Resources operates and maintains the State Water Project, provides dam safety and flood control and inspection services, assists local water districts in water management and water conservation planning, and plans for future statewide water needs.

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